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ABSTRACT

The two illustrated children's stories are part of a series about the Blackfeet Indians. The first story, originally published in 1916, is the story of Weasel Woman, an orphaned girl who stole her way into a raiding party and became a successful warrior and, ultimately, a war chief named Running Eagle. The second story is a Blackfeet creation tale that describes how, after the Old Man created the world and the first people, a man and his sons set out to find better hunting and discovered the plains and the buffalo. The tale explains how the father rubbed magic black medicine on the feet of his first son so that he could move close to the buffalo to hunt them and how that son and his descendents were the Blackfeet Indians. The story also explains that the other two sons and their descendents settled in areas nearby and became the South Blackfeet and the Blood Indians. (SB)

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THE STORY OF RUNNING EAGLE

and

"THE CAUSE OF THINGS"

by

James Willard Schultz

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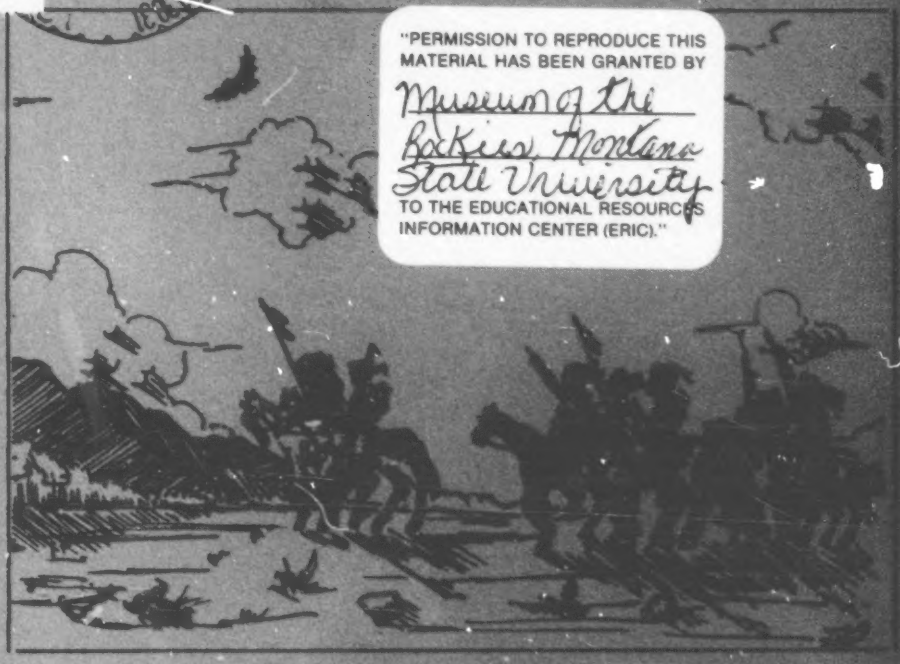

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Heart Butte Bilingual Program

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The Story of Running Eagle: Pi'tamaka
as told by Tail-Feathers-Coming-over-the-Hill

and

"The Cause of Things"
as told by Red Eagle

to

James Willard Schultz

edited by Jon Allan Reyhner
illustrated by Shawn Running Crane

Bilingual Education Program
Heart Butte, Montana
1984

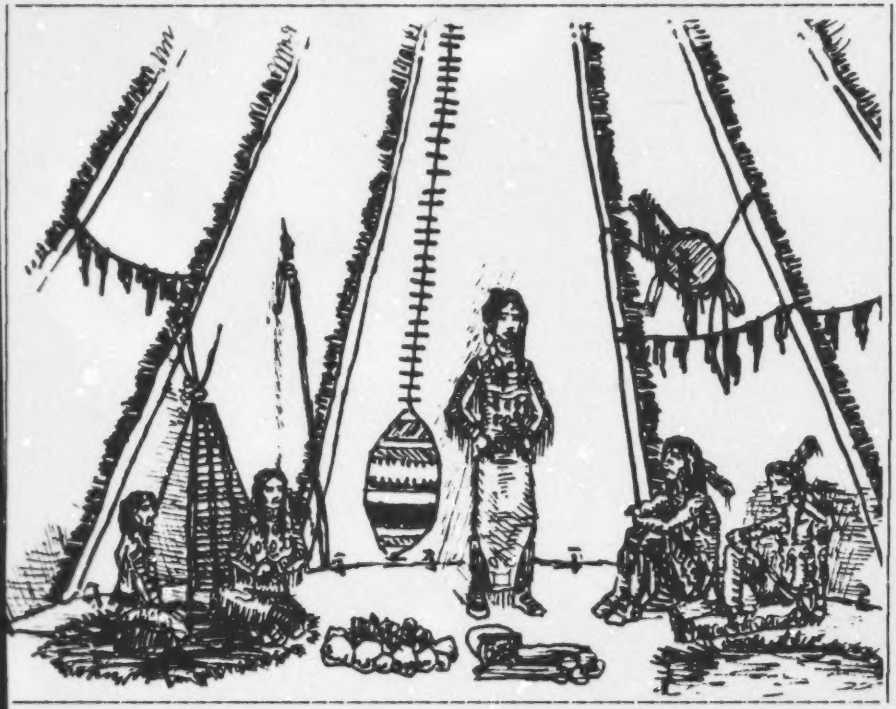
The Story of Running Eagle
by James Willard Schultz

As a girl, her name was Weasel Woman. She was the eldest of two brothers and three sisters. When she had seen fifteen winters her father and mother died. Usually the children would give up their lodge and scatter out to live with relatives and friends. But Weasel Woman said:

> "Somehow, some way, we can manage to live. You boys are old enough to hunt and bring in meat and skins. We three sisters will keep the lodge in good order, and tan the skins for our clothing."

And as she said, so it was done. The orphan family prospered.

But Weasel Woman was not satisfied. Many young men and many old and rich men wanted to marry her. She said "No!" so loudly, and so quickly, that after a time all knew that she would not marry. Wherever a party of warriors gathered for a dance or a feast, there she was looking on, listening to their talk, and giving what help she could. And when a party returned from war, she was



Weasel Women said, "Somehow, some way, we can manage to live. You boys are old enough to hunt and bring in meat and skins. We three sisters will keep the lodge in good order, and tan the skins for our clothing."

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loudest in praising them. All she talked of, all she thought about, was war.

On an evening in her twentieth summer a large party of warriors started out to cross the mountains and raid the Flatheads. They traveled all night. When daylight came, they found that Weasel Woman was with them.

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"Go back! Go home!" the war chief told her. But she would not listen.

"If you will not let me go with you, I shall follow you," she said.

And then spoke up the medicine man of the party: "Chief," he said, "I advise you to allow her to go with us. Something tells me that she will bring us good luck."

"Ah! as you advise me, so shall it be," said the war chief, and the woman went on with them. No man of that party teased her, nor bothered her in any way. Every one of them treated her as they would a sister. It was the strangest war party that ever set forth from any tribe of the plains!

It was at the edge of Flathead Lake that they discovered the enemy. There was a large camp of the Flatheads and their friends, the Pend d'Oreilles. When night came they went close up to it, and the woman said to the war chief, "Let me go in first. Let me see what I can do. I feel that I shall be successful in there." "Go!" the chief told her, "and we will wait for you here, and be ready to help you if you get into trouble."

The woman went into the camp, where all the best horses of the people--their fast

It was at the edge of Flathead Lake that they discovered the enemy. There was a large camp of the Flatheads and their friends, the Pend d'Oreilles.

buffalo runners, their racers, and their stallions--were picketed close to the lodges of their different owners. If she was afraid of being discovered and killed, she never admitted it. The dying moon gave light enough for her to see the size and color of the horses. She took her time and went around among them. Making her choice, she

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cut the ropes of three fine pinto horses, and led them out to where the party awaited her. There she tied them, and went back into camp with the chief and his men and again came out with three horses. Said she then: "I have taken enough for this time. I will await you here and take care of what we have."

The men went back several times. Then having all the horses they could drive rapidly, the party struck for the mountains. In several days' time they arrived home without the loss of a man or a horse.

A few days after the party came into camp the medicine lodge was put up. On the day that the warriors counted their coups, new names were given them. An old warrior and medicine man called Weasel Woman before the people and had her count her coup--of going twice into the enemy's camp and taking six horses. All shouted approval. Then the medicine man gave her the name, Pi'-ta-mak-a, Running Eagle. A very great name of a chief whose shadow had some time before gone on to the Sand Hills.

After that Pi'tamaka, as we now may call her, did not have to sneak after a party in order to go to war with them. She was asked

Then having all the horses they could drive rapidly, the party struck for the mountains.

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to go. After two or three more successful raids against different enemies, the Crows, the Sioux, and the Flatheads, she herself became a war chief. Warriors begged to be allowed to join her parties. They believed that where she led nothing but good luck would come to them. She now wore men's clothing when on a raid. At home she wore her woman's clothing. But even in that dress she, like any man, gave feasts and dances. The greatest chiefs and warriors came to them and were glad to be there.

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On her sixth raid, Pi'tamaka led a large war party against the Flatheads. On the other side of the mountains, they fell in with a war party of Bloods, one of our brother tribes of the North. For several days the two parties traveled along together. Then one evening the Blood chief, Falling Bear, said to Pi'tamaka's servant, "Go tell your chief woman that I would like to marry her."

"Chief, you do not understand," the boy told him, "She is not that kind. Men are her brothers, and nothing more. She will never marry. I cannot give her your message. I am afraid that she will be angry with me for carrying it to her."

On the next day, as they were traveling along, the Blood chief said to Pi'tamaka, "I have never loved, but I love now. I love you. My heart is all yours. Let us marry."

"I will not say 'yes' to that, nor will I say 'no'," the woman chief answered him. "I will consider what you ask, and give you an answer after we make this raid."

And with that the Blood chief said no more but felt encouraged. He thought that in time she would agree to become his woman.

On the other side of the mountains, they fell in with a war party of Bloods, one of our brother tribes of the North.

That very evening the scouts ahead discovered a large camp of Flathead and Kootenai Indians, more than a hundred lodges of them. When night came both parties drew close in to it. Pi'tamaka ordered her followers to remain where they were and told the Blood chief to say the same thing to his men. She then told the Blood chief to go into the camp and take horses. He went in and returned with one horse.

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"It is now my turn," said Pi'tamaka, and she went in and brought out two horses.

The Blood chief went in and brought out two horses.

Pi'tamaka went in and brought out four horses.

The Blood chief went in and brought out two horses.

Pi'tamaka went in and brought out one horse. And then she said to the Blood chief, "Our men are becoming impatient to go in there and take horses. We will each of us go in once more, and then let them do what they can." So the Blood chief went in for the fourth and last time, and came back leading four horses, making nine in all. And then Pi'tamaka went in and cut the ropes of eight horses, and safely led them out, making in all fifteen that she had taken. The warriors then went in, making several trips. Then, with all the horses that could be easily driven, the big double party headed home.

On the next day, as Pi'tamaka and the Blood chief were riding together, he said to her:

"I love you so much that I can wait no longer for my answer. Give

Pi'tamaka said, "I gave you your chance. It would have been 'yes' had you taken more horses than I did from the camp of the enemy. But I took the most. Therefore I cannot marry you."

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it to me now. I believe that you are going to say, 'Yes, I will be your woman.'"

Said Pi'tamaka:

"I gave you your chance. It would have been yes had you taken more horses than I did from the camp of the enemy. But I took the most. Therefore I cannot marry you."

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That was her way of getting around saying "no" to the chief. She had beaten him, an old experienced warrior, in taking of the enemy's horses. He could not ask her again to become his woman. It is said that he felt very badly about it all.

Pi'tamaka now carried a gun when she went to war. She used it well in several fights with the enemy, counting in all three coups. Each one of them the taking of a gun from the man she herself killed. And then, haiya! On her ninth raid she led a party against the Flatheads. While she and all her men were in the camp choosing horses and cutting the ropes, the Flatheads discovered them and began firing. She and five of her men were killed. And so passed Pi'tamaka, virgin, and brave woman chief of our people. She died young, about seventy winters ago.

The End

And so passed Pi'tamaka, virgin, and brave woman chief of our people.

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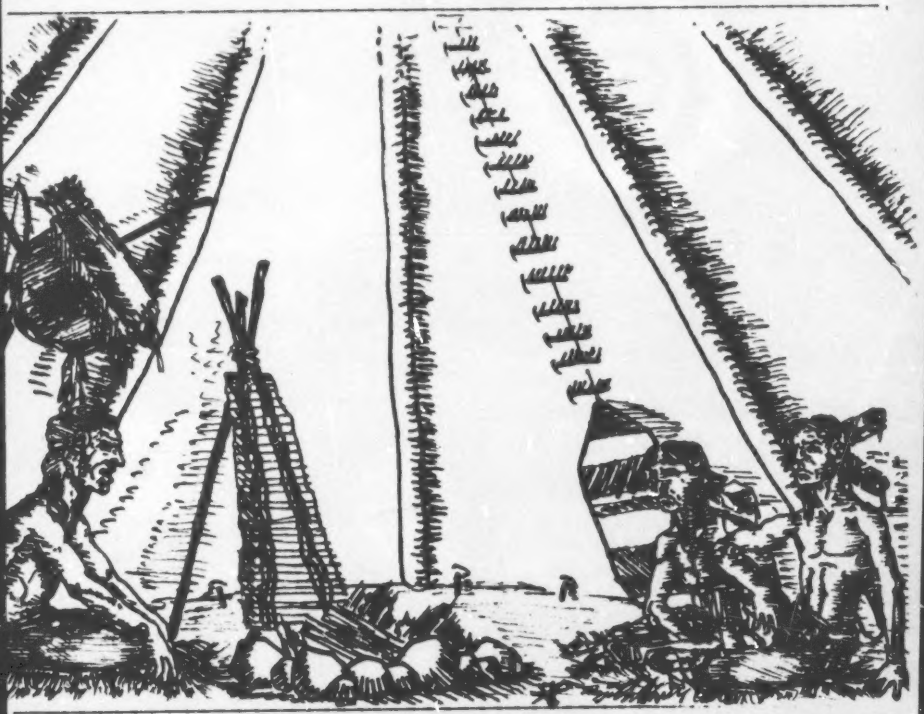
"THE CAUSE OF THINGS"
by James Willard Schultz

On a bitterly cold night after the Medicine Chinook, Red Eagle and I sat with Rising Wolf in his lodge. The buffalo robe couches were soft and comfortable. The grateful heat of the fire made us drowsy, talk became slow, and finally stopped. Presently the wife of the young man who herded the old man's horses came in with her son. The couple made their home with Rising Wolf and relieved him of all household chores.

The woman took her place on a long, broad robe couch with willow slat back rests at either end of it to the left of the doorway. The boy also sat down and snuggled close to her. He looked solemnly at the leaping fire with unblinking eyes. The silence continued. I was wondering what the child could be thinking. Then he turned and looked at his mother. He asked, "Nee-Ksis'Tah, who made us?"

"Who made us? Why--Old Man, of course." she hesitatingly answered.



On a bitterly cold night after the Medicine Chinook, Red Eagle and I sat with Rising Wolf in his lodge.

Red Eagle spoke,

"Woman, is it possible that you have not yet taught your son the cause of things. You have not told him the sacred tales? No? Well, come here my boy, and I will tell you a story."

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The little fellow readily ran around the fire to him. He was careful to circle past the doorway instead of in front of the master of the lodge--that would break one's medicine--and nestled cozily in his lap. "Now. Now tell me, grandfather, tell me true, who made us?" the boy asked again.

The old man fondly stroked his shining, parted and neatly braided hair. He answered,

> "Old Man made us. I don't know who made him. I guess he always was. He was and is a god. He was not called Old Man because of great age. The gods can not grow old, they live forever. Our first fathers gave him that name because of his appearance. He is blue eyed, white skinned and his hair is the color of the morning sky just before the rising sun comes in sight. He is very handsome, a very beautiful man--this god, this world maker of ours.
>
> Well, Old Man, having made the world, the plains and mountains, the great lakes and rivers and little streams, the trees, plants and grasses, and all the animals; having

Red Eagle answered, "Old Man made us. I don't know who made him. I guess he always was. He was and is a god.

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got everything ready; then made us. That is he made our first fathers and mothers. But it was not a very good place, there where he caused them to grow up and increase. It was in a small valley at the foot of great mountains. Soon the people became so

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many that they killed off all the game and began to starve. Anyhow, there was no food animals other than deer and birds in the country.

Said an old man to his wife and his three married sons one day, 'I have had a talk with our Maker. He told me of a country he had made where game is plentiful and pointed the way. Let us go and find it.'

They started, the four men and women. After climbing high, rough mountains for many days and descending them for many more days, they came at last to the edge of the great plains. There they saw game of all kinds. They saw many, many animals new to them. The oddest of all were those that later they named buffalo. 'Father,' said the oldest son, 'let us kill one of those high backed, long whiskered, black horned grass eaters and taste its flesh. Something tells me that it will be good.'

'Very well,' the father answered, 'it shall be as you say. He rubbed a secret black medicine on his son's

He rubbed a secret black medicine on his son's feet that enabled him to run right up alongside a band of animals and kill a number of them with bow and arrow.

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feet which enabled him to run right up alongside a band of the animals and kill a number of them with bow and arrow. Their flesh proved to be better than that of any of the other new animals. The hides were found to be best of all for making lodges and

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clothing, warm wraps and bedding. 'My son, you have done a great favor to us all,' said the father. 'I see now that we are to become a very numerous people, too many to all camp together and hunt together. Therefore, you and your children, and those to come after them, shall be known as the Blackfeet clan. In time to come you must leave us, and choose, and live in a part of this great hunting ground Old Man has given us.'

Hearing this, the other sons became jealous of their elder brother. 'You make him first in everything,' they told their father. 'You give him the strong black running medicine. You give him a name for himself and his clan that is to be. You give him the choice of a part of this great plains country. Now, what are you going to do for us?'

'Go forth on discovery,' the father ordered. 'Go east, go south, into unknown-to-us country and learn what is there. When you return I

will give you names according to what you have done.'

The sons departed at once and were gone a long time. The second son returned first. He brought some weapons and some beautiful clothing of a strange people, enemies who had tried to kill him. So the father named him Pi-kun-i, clothing, and from him are we, the people of this tribe, descended. The whites, knowing no better, call us South Blackfeet.

The third son, the youngest, came home. He had gone farthest and seen many strange peoples. He killed and scalped a number of their chiefs. Because of that the name Ahk-ai-na, or for short, Kai-na, Many Chiefs was given him, for himself and those to come after him.

As the old father had predicted, the children of his sons, and their children after them, rapidly increased in the rich game land Old Man had given them. Soon the time came when they were obliged to separate. Having the first right,

the Blackfeet clan chose the country watered by the North Saskatchewan River and its tributaries. Next, the clan of the Pi-kun-i had the say, and they took the lands along the upper Missouri River and its feeders. This proved to be the richest land of all. There was left then for the Kai-na; or as the whites mistakenly call them, the bloods; the country watered by the Belly, Old Man's, and St. Mary's Rivers, and that they chose. And that, my son, is the story of the beginning of things. Having made us and given us the best of all game lands, he went away to the west, saying that he would return some day. We look for him to arrive at any time.

"Yes, grandfather," the youngster piped, "I understand it all now. The Old Man made us and gave us, the Blackfeet, Kai-na and Pi-kun-i, the richest country of all the world for our very own. Yes, he was very good to us, wasn't he! Tell me more about him."

Within five minutes the boy was sleeping.

"Not tonight. I see you are getting sleepy," the old man answered and sent him to his mother. Within five minutes he was sleeping.

The End

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NOTES

James Willard Schultz lived with the Blackfeet during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He saw the last of the great Buffalo herds disappear and the forcing of the Blackfeet onto smaller and smaller reservations. He wrote many stories about the Blackfeet. "The Cause of Things" is part of a larger story called "Famine Winter" found in WHY GONE THOSE TIMES (ed. by Eugene Lee Silliman, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1974). The present editor, Jon Reyhner, simplified the stories for use by elementary students on the Blackfeet Reservation.

The Blackfeet Reservation is located in north-central Montana on the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains next to Glacier National Park. A waterfall in Glacier National Park is named in honor of Running Eagle who probably lived sometime in the first half of the nineteenth century.

To learn more about the Blackfeet, three books are suggested: THE BLACKFEET: RAIDERS OF THE NORTHWESTERN PLAINS by John C. Ewers, University of Oklahoma Press, 1982; BLACKFOOT LODGE TALES by George Bird Grinnell, University of Nebraska Press, 1962 (This is a reprint of the 1892 edition); and THE OLD NORTH TRAIL: LIFE, LEGENDS AND RELIGION OF THE BLACKFEET INDIANS by Walter McClintock, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1968 (This is a reprint of the 1910 edition).

The Heart Butte Bilingual Program has published a number of other stories for children about the Blackfeet including "The Loud Mouthed Gun", "Lame Bear", "Natosi: Strong Medicine", "Sik-ki-mi", and "Little Blaze and the Buffalo Jump". These stories span the history of the Blackfeet from the time before they had horses and guns till their first contacts with White-men in the middle of the nineteenth century. They are available from the non-profit Council for Indian Education, Box 31215, Billings, MT 59107.

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